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News Release

Mahnomen, Minn., to Launch Natural Play Space Project; Seeking input from community

*By Itollems on Monday, March 3, 2014*The University of Minnesota Crookston is launching a project in Mahnomen, Minn., to design a natural play space. Eric Castle, assistant professor in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, teaches landscape design and construction courses on the Crookston campus. Castle and Ethan Kojetin, a senior majoring in horticulture from Atwater, Minn., will be assisting Mahnomen in this project. A design workshop to engage the community is scheduled for March 24 in Mahnomen starting at 7 p.m. at the Mahnomen Area Senior Center. All are welcome. Contact Tammy Carlsrud at 218-935-2527 for details.

Funding for the design project comes from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota's Centerfor Prevention grant to U of M'sNorthwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (RSDP).

Mahnomen County Public Health is focusing on active living through its Statewide Health Improvement Plan work, and natural play spaces are an excellent way for families to be active together. The natural play space is a playground that uses things found in nature - the kind of things that children used to find on their own. Getting help with the design of the space will ensure that it is not only fun, but also safe, and aesthetically pleasing. Castle hopes to accomplish two goals at the meeting. First, introduce the purpose/benefits of natural play spaces and give examples of natural play spaces in other communities. Second, to gain an understanding of what community members would like in their natural play space which will then be summarized and used to create the preliminary designs. The first goal will be achieved through a presentation by Castle and Kojetin. To achieve the second goal community members will divide into groups of 4-7 people at tables. Each table will have a large printout of the site that people can write on, place sticky notes on, draw on, and arrange game pieces that represent natural play space features. Each table will then report to the larger group what they would like to see in the natural play space. To learn more about the work of the Northwest Regional Partnership go to <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/rsdp/northwest>. The Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDPs) give communities in Greater Minnesota access to the University of Minnesota in order to help solve problems and take advantage of new opportunities. As a part of University of Minnesota Extension, NW RSDP brings together local talent and resources with University of Minnesota knowledge and seed funding to drive sustainability in four areas: agriculture and food systems, tourism and resilient communities, natural resources, and clean energy.

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